

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 AGR-05 SP-02 AID-05 NSC-05

CIEP-01 TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-04 OMB-01 CEA-01 CIAE-00

COME-00 FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-06 XMB-02 OPIC-03

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4781

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PASS AGRICULTURE FOR NOVOTNY

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, EAID, SY

SUBJECT: SYRIAN WHEAT CROP

REF: STATE 135997

1. AGATT PITCHER CONTACTED ORGANISME GENERAL DES CEREALES ET DES MINOTERIES (GOCM) JUNE 9 AND MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE EARLIER FOR OFFICIAL ESTIMATES ON 1975 WHEAT CROP. ACCORDING TO GOCM SAMPLE CROP SURVEY UNDERWAY WITH RESULTS UNKNOWN. ALL OFFICIAL STATISTICS MUST BE COORDINATED WITH SYRIAN CENTRAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS FOR FINAL APPROVAL BEFORE OFFICIALLY RELEASED. GOCM STATED THAT A DISPUTE EXISTS BETWEEN MIN AG AND CENTRAL BUREAU ON 1974 REPEAT 1974 FINAL WHEAT ESTIMATE AND THEREFORE THEY HAVE NOT BEEN RELEASED. BECAUSE OF ABOVE SITUATION, AGATT BELIEVES IT MAY BE SOME TIME BEFORE ANY SYRIAN OFFICIALS CAN OFFICIALLY PROVIDE DATA ON 1975 WHEAT CROP.

2. FROM OTHER HIGHLY PLACED AND FAVORABLY KNOWN SYRIAN CONTACT, AGATT HAS 1975 FORECAST, BELIEVES TO BE MIN AGS, INDICATING
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TOTAL AREA AT 1,586,000 HECTARES, 252,000 OF WHICH

HIGH YIELDING VARIETIES (HYV) NORMALLY PLANTED ON IRRIGATED AND HIGH-RAINFALL LANDS. PRODUCTION FORECAST TOTALS 1,454,000 METRIC TONS, OF WHICH 484,000 FROM HYV WHEAT.

3. AGATT HAS MADE INQUIRES AMONG GRAIN TRADE IN BEIRUT AND FORD FOUNDATION CONTACTS TRAVELLING OCCASIONALLY IN SYRIA ON WHEAT PROJECT. FROM TRADE WE GET WHEAT CROP ESTIMATES AS LOW AS 500,000 TONS RANGING UPWARDS TO ONE MILLION TONS. AGATT'S EXPERIENCE WITH GRAIN TRADE IS THEIR ESTIMATES FREQUENTLY ON LOW SIDE WITH SOME TRADERS REPEATING INFORMATION WITHOUT REAL KNOWLEDGE OF FACTS.

4. AGATT CURRENTLY ESTIMATES 1975 WHEAT CROP AT 1.2 MILLION TONS, AS FROM MOST INDICATIONS CROP BETTER THAN 1974'S 1.05 MILLION TONS. THERE WERE RAINS IN APRIL AND EARLY MAY 1975 IN IMPORTANT NE SYRIAN WHEAT ARE, WHICH WAS NOT THE CASE A YEAR EARLIER. AGATT UNDERSTANDS GOCM INITIALLY INTENDED TO PURCHASE 500,000 TONS OF DOMESTIC WHEAT, AND THAT GOCM'S DIRECTOR IBRAHIM IN HASSAKE REGION NOW TO EVALUATE HARVESTING AND MARKETING SITUATION. GOCM'S FLOUR MILL'S REQUIREMENTS ESTIMATED AT 700,000 TO 800,000 TONS, BUT GOCM HAS NO INTENTIONS TO BUY FOREIGN WHEAT NOW. GOCM EXPECTS 500,000 TONS DOMESTIC WHEAT PURCHASES A MINIMUM, SO PRECISE WHEAT IMPORT REQUIREMENTS CAN ONLY BE KNOWN WHEN GOCM WELL ALONG WITH PURCHASES OF DOMESTIC WHEAT. GOCM HAS TENDER OUT FOR 30,000 TONS OF WHEAT FLOUR WHICH IS NEEDED FOR QUALITY REASONS. ALSO SYRIAN TITLE I WHEAT PURCHASES TALLING 75,000 TONS SCHEDULED FOR JUNE DELIVERY U.S. PORTS WILL CONTRIBUTE TO FY1976 SUPPLIES.
GODLEY

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